

FORMER NAZIS LIVE WELL IN EAST GERMANY

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For former Nazis, life under one kind of dictatorship is very much the same as under another. This precept appears to be confirmed by the recent publication by a refugee lawyers' association in West Germany of a list of some 150 former high-ranking Nazis who are now contentedly working in positions of trust for the Communist regime of East Germany. They are derisively known as the "Red-laquered Nazis."

The lawyers' association, composed of men who had to flee for their lives from the red terror of East Germany, has revealed that the president of East Germany's high court is a former Nazi who joined the Hitlerian party in 1937 and was affiliated with one of its so-called welfare organizations. Another star in the collection of red-tinted Nazis is Professor Herbert Kroeger, a former member of the die-hard SS organization, notorious for its brutality and Hitlerian fanaticism. He now occupies the exalted post of Rector of the Academy of Government and Legal Studies at Babelsberg.

The lawyers' association points out that a surprisingly large number of members of the higher teaching professions has swung from national-socialism to international Communism. The list shows that there are 20 of them and that 11 have been, or still are, rectors of East German universities or other institutions of higher learning.

It has not been possible to interview any of these men to talk about their surprising conversion and thus discover the real reason for their abject conduct. It is possible that a few of them may have been sincere in their change of political thinking, although in view of their past records this is quite doubtful.

It is far more likely that opportunism, combined with the desire for survival at any price, may have influenced these former Nazis in their decision to work for their bitterest enemies. It is also a fact that there are many opportunities for people of even mediocre intellectual standing in East Germany because the zone has a serious lack of intellectuals, teachers, doctors and scientists, most of whom have long since fled the Communist "paradise" for West Germany.

It is well-known that the only way to get along in a Communist-dominated country is to profess undying love of Communism. While the rewards for doing this may sometimes be great, the obverse is distinctly unpleasant and can easily net a man who has the courage to stand by his beliefs a decade or two behind the barbed wire of a forced labor camp. This proves that it is far easier to switch one's loyalties from one dictatorship to another than it is to follow the more difficult path of true democratic allegiance.

It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that no less than 47 of the 466 members of the People's Chamber, the rubber-stamp parliament of East Germany, are men with Nazi records. In fact, one of them, a Siegfried Dallmann, the son of a pastor of Pomerania, is Chairman of the Chamber's justice committee. Another outstanding example is Professor Kurt Saeuberlich, a former SS colonel and now a reputed Communist activist who today bears the title of Hero of Labor.

One of the former Nazis who has made the most spectacular career is the 48-year old Ernst Grossmann who is a member of the East German Party's Central Committee, a member of parliament, a Hero of Labor, the bearer of many Communist decorations and a close friend of Party chief Walter Ulbricht.

In 1938, Grossmann was a member of the Sudeten German Volunteer Corps, a terror organization founded by the notorious Gauleiter Konrad Henlein. After the Anschluss between Czechoslovakia and the Reich, Grossmann became a full-fledged member of the Hitlerian party, graduating to the SS-Death Head group to become a guard at the dread Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

When disaster overtook Germany in 1945, Grossmann "disappeared," soon to come to light again however in the East Zone as a member of the Communist Party. In 1951, Grossmann came to the notice of Ulbricht who summoned him to Berlin and gave him the task of forming the first kolkhose in East Germany. He is reported to have carried out his assignment successfully, but brutally, for which he won several distinctions. Not the least of these was the fact that the kolkhose he had organized was named after Walter Ulbricht. For this, Grossmann was named Hero of Labor and received a bonus of 10,000 marks. He developed his friendship with Ulbricht and finally climbed to one of the top rungs of the Communist hierarchic ladder by becoming a member of the Central Committee. In the winter of 1952 he accompanied Ulbricht to Moscow to attend the CPSU's XIX Congress and was presented to Stalin.

Grossmann's sensationally successful career under the Communists, however, is not to the liking of all his present comrades, not a few of whom were inmates of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp while Grossmann was their guard. There have been quite a number of protests and Ulbricht has frequently been very embarrassed by his friendship with this former Nazi.